(b) if so, the present status of the project;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the project is held up due to non-allotment of coal mining block to NTPC by the Ministry of Coal;

(d) if so, the reasons for delay in allocation of the coal mining block to NTPC; and

(e) by when the coal mining block is likely to be allotted to NTPC?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. An MoU has been signed by National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) with Gujarat Power Corporation Limited (GPCL) and Gujarat Electricity Board (GEB) for setting up a 1000 MW Power Project at Pipavav in Amreli District of Gujarat as a 50:50 joint venture project of NTPC and GPCL/agencies of Government of Gujarat based on tecno-economic feasibility which is to be carried out for selection of optimum fuel. NTPC in consultation with GPCL has taken up various site specific studies to prepare the Feasibility Report.

(c) No, Sir. The following 6 coal blocks have already been allocated to NTPC to meet the requirement of their future power plants:

1. Pakri-Barwadi
2. Talai-Palli
3. Kerandari
4. Chatti-Bariatu
5. Chhatrasal
6. Dulanga

In addition to above, two more coal blocks *viz.* (1) Brahmani and (2) Chichro Patsimal have been allocated for Joint Venture between NTPC and CIL to meet addtional requirement of power plants.

(d) and (e) Do not arise in view of reply at (c) above.

FDI in coal

1033. SHRI SITARAM YECHURY: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are opening coal sector for FDI;

(b) if so, the reasons to invite FDI in coal sector therefor;

(c) whether Government consulted concerned Trade Unions before opening up of this sector; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO): (a) and (b) Considering the increasing demand for coal and lignite and since exploration and mining activities are subject to sectoral approvals/regulations, the Government has reviewed the policy on FDI. It has been decided to increase FDI caps to 100% and permit it under the automatic route for coal and lignite mining for captive consumption by power projects, iron and steel, cement production and other eligible activities permitted as per the provisions of the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973.

(c) and (d) FDI is permitted only in respect of captive mining of coal and lignite for specified end uses. Therefore, the trade Unions of public sector coal companies were not consulted.

Profit of Bihar Telecom Circle

†1034. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the estimated profit of Bihar Telecom Circle under Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has fallen during the last two years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that the status of expansion of network of the telephone and mobile services under Bihar Telecom Circle is not satisfactory; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) No, Sir. The profit of Bihar Telecom Circle of BSNL has not fallen during the last two years. As per the Audited Accounts of Bihar Circule, there is an increase in net profit during the last two years as under:—

(Rs. in crores)

Financial year	Profits	Increase in Profits
2004-05	34.56	46.10
2005-06	66.80	32.24

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.